

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: TOCY, UR

SUBJECT: R/V WESTERN VIKING CLEARANCE REQUEST, 15 JUNE -
20 JULY 1978

1. R/V WESTERN VIKING HAS BEEN CHARTERED BY THE NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION (NOAA) TO CONDUCT RESEARCH ON THE BOWHEAD WHALE IN THE NORTHERN BERING AND SOUTHERN CHUKCHI SEAS. THE PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH IS TO LOCATE THE WHALES, DEFINE THEIR DISTRIBUTION IN THE SUMMER SEASON, AND STUDY THEIR FEEDING BEHAVIOR.

2. NOAA IS EMBARKING ON A MAJOR RESEARCH PROGRAM ON BOWHEADS TO DETERMINE THE NUMBER OF WHALES IN THE POPULATION. TO DO THIS IT MUST KNOW THE TEMPORAL AND SPATIAL EXTENT OF THEIR DISTRIBUTION FROM APRIL THROUGH JULY. EVIDENCE FROM OLD COMMERCIAL WHALING RECORDS STRONGLY
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INDICATES THAT THE BOWHEADS WERE MORE PREVALENT OFF THE SOVIET COAST THAN OFF THE U.S. COAST. IT IS IMPERATIVE, THEN, THAT THE CORRIDOR BETWEEN ST. LAWRENCE ISLAND TO THE BERING STRAIT WEST OF 160 DEGREES W. LONGITUDE, AND NORTHWEST OF THE BERING STRAIT INTO SOVIET WATERS BE EXPLORED FOR BOWHEAD WHALES THIS SUMMER. THIS RESEARCH HAS BEEN DISCUSSED DURING WORKING MEETINGS OF

THE US-USSR ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENT. DR. V. A. ZEMSKIY,

DIRECTOR OF THE MARINE MAMMAL LABORATORY (VNIRO) IS FAMILIAR WITH THE RESEARCH PLANS AND YURI KAZAKOV, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY FOR THE US/USSR AGREEMENT ON THE SOVIET SIDE, HYDROMET, WILL MOST LIKELY SUPPORT THE RESEARCH.

3. THE ONLY EQUIPMENT WHICH WILL BE USED ARE BINOCULARS, INCLINOMETERS, AND CAMERAS. POSSIBLE WATER SAMPLES WILL BE TAKEN IF WHALES ARE OBSERVED IN THE FEEDING MODE TO DETERMINE THE FOOD SOURCE. A BERTH IS AVAILABLE FOR A SOVIET PARTICIPANT AND ALL DATA RESULTS WILL BE FREELY SHARED.

4. A. THE CHIEF SCIENTIST IS DR. HOWARD W. BRAHAM OF THE NORTHWEST FISHERIES CENTER, NOAA, WHO WILL BE SUPPORTED BY A SCIENTIFIC PARTY OF 6. SHIP'S CAPTAIN IS JOHN JAFTOD WITH A CREW OF 4.

B. WESTERN VIKING IS 199 GROSS TONS, 102 FT. LONG AND HAS A 13 FT. DRAFT. RADIO CALL SIGN IS WYC 5250 AND SHIP MONITORS EMERGENCY FREQUENCIES.

5. A SURVEY AREA CHART IS BEING POUCHED. IT MAY BE NECESSARY TO COME WITHIN 2 MILES OF THE SOVIET COAST
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NEAR THE CHUKOTSKIY PENINSULA, ESPECIALLY AT THE BERING STRAIT. MOST OF THE RESEARCH WILL TAKE PLACE FURTHER OFFSHORE.

6. ACTION: EMBASSY IS REQUESTED TO SEEK PERMISSION FOR R/V WESTERN VIKING TO CONDUCT THE RESEARCH DESCRIBED DURING THE PERIOD 15 JUNE - 20 JULY 1978. DEPT IS AWARE THAT LEAD-TIME IS LESS THAN DESIRABLE BUT SOVIET INTEREST IN PROJECT MAY SWAY THEM TO OVERLOOK THIS. VANCE

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